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SCIENCE

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REMARKS ON THE PROGRESS OF CELESTIAL MECHANICS SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE CENTURY.*

THE application of mathematics to the solution of the problems presented by the motion of the heavenly bodies has had a larger degree of success than the same application in the case of the other departments of physics. This is probably due to two causes. The principal objects to be treated in the former case are visible every clear night, consequently the questions connected with them received earlier attention; while, in the latter case, the phenomena to be discussed must oftentimes be produced by artificial means in the laboratory; and the discovery of certain classes of them, as, for instance, the property of magnetism, may justly be attributed to accident. A second cause is undoubtedly to be found in the fact that the application of quantitative reasoning to what is usually denominated as physics generally leads to a more difficult department of mathematics than in the case of the motion of the heavenly bodies. In the latter we have but one independent variable, the time; while in the former generally several are present, which makes the difference of having to integrate ordinary differential equations or those which are partial. Thus it happens that, while the

*Presidential address delivered before the American Mathematical Society, December 27, 1895, by Dr G. W. Hill.